

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Currently Amended)** An antimicrobial grip, comprising an elongated strip comprising an elastomer layer bonded to a textile layer, wherein said elastomer layer further comprises a powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent dispersed therein.

2. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 1, wherein said elastomer layer comprises polyurethane.

3. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 2, wherein said polyurethane has a plurality of closed pores that extend vertically in a direction normal to a longitudinal axis of the elongated strip.

4. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 1, wherein said textile layer comprises felt.

5. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 1, wherein said textile layer further comprises an adhesive layer and a protective quick-release tape, such that upon release of the tape, the elongated strip can be adhered to a handle.

6. **(Currently Amended)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 1, wherein said powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent comprises an antimicrobial metal, selected from the group consisting of silver, copper, zinc, tin, mercury, lead, iron, cobalt, nickel, manganese, arsenic, antimony, bismuth, barium, cadmium and chromium.

7. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 6, wherein the antimicrobial metal is silver or zinc.

8. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 6, wherein the antimicrobial metal is silver.

9. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 6, wherein said antimicrobial agent further comprises a porous mineral-based carrier.

10. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 9, wherein the porous mineral-based carrier is selected from the group consisting of a silica-alumina carrier, a zeolite carrier, or a zirconium phosphate carrier.

11. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 10, wherein the porous mineral based carrier is a silica-alumina carrier.

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12. **(Original)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 11, wherein the silica-alumina carrier is montmorillonite, having a chemical formula: $\text{Na}_{0.7} \text{Al}_{3.3} \text{Mg}_{0.7} \text{Si}_8 \text{O}_{20} (\text{OH})_4 \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$.

13. **(Currently Amended)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 1, wherein said powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent is present at a concentration by weight in a range of about 0.1% to 20%.

14. **(Currently Amended)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 13, wherein the concentration by weight of said powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent is in a range of about 1% to 10%.

15. **(Currently Amended)** The antimicrobial grip of Claim 14, wherein the concentration by weight of said powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent is about 2%.

16. **(Currently Amended)** A golf club, comprising an antimicrobial grip comprising a layer of polyurethane bonded to a layer of felt, said layers of polyurethane and felt being configured so as to reduce impact-related shock, wherein said polyurethane layer further comprises a silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent dispersed therein.

17. **(Currently Amended)** The golf club of Claim 16, wherein said silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent comprises montmorillonite containing silver at a concentration of about 1% to 15% by weight.

18. **(Currently Amended)** The golf club of Claim 16, wherein said silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent comprises montmorillonite containing silver at a concentration of about 2% by weight.

19. **(Currently Amended)** A racquet, comprising an antimicrobial grip comprising a layer of polyurethane bonded to a layer of felt, said layers of polyurethane and felt being configured so as to reduce impact-related shock, wherein said polyurethane layer further comprises a silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent dispersed therein.

20. **(Currently Amended)** The racquet of Claim 19, wherein said silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent comprises montmorillonite containing silver at a concentration of about 1% to 15% by weight.

21. **(Currently Amended)** The racquet of Claim 19, wherein said silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent comprises montmorillonite containing silver at a concentration of about 2% by weight.

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22. **(Currently Amended)** An exercise device, comprising an antimicrobial grip comprising a layer of polyurethane bonded to a layer of felt, said layers of polyurethane and felt being configured so as to reduce impact-related shock, wherein said polyurethane layer further comprises a silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent dispersed therein.

23. **(Currently Amended)** The exercise device of Claim 22, wherein said silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent comprises montmorillonite containing silver at a concentration of about 1% to 15% by weight.

24. **(Currently Amended)** The exercise device of Claim 22, wherein said silver-based powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent comprises montmorillonite containing silver at a concentration of about 2% by weight.

25. **(Withdrawn)** A method of making the antimicrobial grip of Claim 1, comprising:
dispersing the powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent in a solution comprising an elastomer and a solvent;

coating the textile layer with said solution; and

removing said solvent, thereby coagulating the elastomer on the textile layer to form the elongated strip.

26. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 25, wherein the textile layer further comprises an adhesive layer and a protective quick-release tape.

27. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 25, wherein removing said solvent comprises immersing the coated textile layer in a water bath.

28. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 26, further comprising applying pressure and heat.

29. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 25, wherein said elastomer comprises polyurethane.

30. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 25, wherein said solvent comprises dimethyl formamide.

31. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 25, wherein the powdered inorganic antimicrobial agent comprises silver.

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SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

Applicant wishes to thank Examiner Blau for the courteous telephonic interview extended to their representative Mark R. Benedict that was conducted on October 6, 2005.

Identification of Claims Discussed

Claims 1-31

Identification of Prior Art Discussed

Pan (U.S. Patent Application No. 2002/0132876)

Proposed Amendments

Amend Claim 1 to clarify that Applicant's inorganic antimicrobial agent is in the physical form of a solid (e.g., powder, particulate, or free metal form, etc.), thus, clearly distinguishing it from Pan's organotin in the form of a solvent (i.e., a liquid), wherein the tin is covalently bound to four (4) carbon atoms within the hydrocarbon backbone. Several amendment strategies were discussed.

Principal Arguments and Other Matters

Applicant urged that the tin-containing antibacterial agent disclosed in Pan is an organometallic hydrocarbon-based solvent (i.e., a liquid), that covalently incorporates a tin atom. In contrast, Applicant's antimicrobial agent is a powdered inorganic compound (i.e., a solid).

Results of Interview

An agreement with respect to allowable claim language was not reached.